

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Update on Kentucky Department of Education Literacy Initiatives

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 158.792 and 704 KAR 3:480 - Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grants; NCLB-Reading First; KRS 156.553 and 704 KAR 3:490 – Teacher’s Professional Growth Fund; 703 KAR 5:010 – Writing Portfolio Procedures

History/Background:

Existing Policy. A Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) goal in the strategic plan is for every student to read at or above the proficient level. Kentucky Department of Education staff provided a specific update on the Kentucky Read to Achieve grant program and federally funded Reading First Program in the fall of 2006. The purpose of this review item is to provide the KBE with an update on literacy initiatives that are being implemented both internally and with collaborative partners to reach this goal.

The focus for the literacy work was developed with the Kentucky Literacy Partnership, a group representing a consortium of state agencies as part of Kentucky’s participation in federal Title I reading funding. A series of Literacy Summits resulted in the identification of certain conditions that must be met if the state is to realize its objective of being a fully literate population. The basis for these conditions included research on the state and national level and data from the Kentucky Core Content Test, the National Assessment of Educational Progress as well as college readiness assessments, such as the ACT. The statements below, as agreed upon by summit participants, serve as the focus for the KDE literacy work on improving the literacy performance of Kentucky students.

Conditions of Literacy Success

1. Supportive, participating families that value literacy;
2. Early diagnosis and evaluation with appropriate individual intervention for students who struggle with literacy at all levels;
3. Content area reading and writing instruction in all academic areas;
4. Acknowledgement and ownership by communities of the importance of reading and writing that leads to literacy attainment as a means to improve economic development and the quality of life;
5. Adequate time devoted to the teaching of reading and writing;
6. Engaging instruction in a supportive environment that will motivate students to achieve and to value education;

7. Well-prepared and supported teachers at all levels who have a deep understanding and knowledge of the latest research and processes needed to teach students to read and write in all content areas; and
8. Leadership and policy direction at all levels that support reading and writing and lead to high literacy attainment for all Kentuckians.

Professional development is one key strategy to making sure Kentucky has teachers who have a deep understanding of how to develop students as competent readers and writers. Attachment A, Literacy Professional Development Calendar, provides a partial list of the literacy related professional development opportunities over the past year.

Described below are key KDE literacy initiatives. Attachment B outlines other related initiatives in which KDE is involved as a key partner or in a supportive role. An overview of all of these literacy initiatives is provided in chart form in Attachment C.

Key KDE Literacy Initiatives:

Building a Strong Foundation for School Success Series (BSF)

The BSF series, focused on birth – four year olds, includes:

- ***Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards, Birth through Four*** identifies educational and developmental milestones for the early years including literacy.
- ***Parent Guides to Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards, Birth through Four*** makes the milestones of the Standards accessible to families so that they can support their child's progress through activities and routines in the home environment.
- ***Kentucky's Continuous Assessment Guide*** provides guidance for the use of appropriate instruments to identify child status and literacy development needs.
- ***Kentucky's Quality Self Study*** identifies expectations of programs in meeting children's developmental needs including providing support for all development, including language and literacy skill development.

To support implementation of this series of best practices, KDE facilitates professional development opportunities for education and related agencies focused on providing quality programs and services for children birth through four. Copies of the BSF series have been provided to state-funded preschool staff, early childhood higher education faculty, Head Start staff, private childcare staff, Kentucky Board of Education members, Special Education Cooperatives, Kentucky's Health Access Nurturing Development Services (HANDS), attendees of the Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference (KTLN) and the Kentucky Reading Association (KRA), legislators, and Kentucky families. This information was distributed through local, state, regional and national conferences and institutes such as the following: National Association of Early Childhood Education Conference (NAEYC), Kentucky Infant/Toddler Conference, Black Child Development Institute, Association for Early Childhood Education International (KAECE), National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Conference, National Association for Early Childhood Specialists, and Special Education Conferences.

Early Childhood Centers

KDE is in the process of identifying model early childhood centers in areas served by the Special Education Cooperatives. Once identified, these model centers will serve as professional development sites for best practices and instruction in implementing the Building a Strong Foundation for School Success (BSF) series. Centers may serve birth through age two, but the main focus is on preschool age, 3 and 4 year-olds. Evidence of support and promotion of student learning, including language and literacy development, is a criterion for designation as a Center.

Classrooms of Excellence

Classrooms of Excellence is a rigorous process led by KDE to identify high quality preschool classrooms. The process is an intensive self-study, documenting use of the “Building a Strong Foundation for School Success” (BSF) series specific to early literacy and achievement of an “Exemplary” category on the Early Learning and Language Classroom Observation tool (ELLCO).

Even Start Family Literacy Program

Even Start is an intensive literacy initiative for parents and children (birth through 8) utilizing a comprehensive, scientifically-based reading approach to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy. Programs are designed to help parents become full partners in their child’s education and to help prepare children for successful experiences in school through the integration of adult education, early childhood, parent education and parent and child interactive literacy instruction and activities. Kentucky currently has 32 Even Start Programs.

Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grants

Kentucky’s Read to Achieve (RTA) program, established in 2004 by 704 KAR 3:480 and KRS 158.792, is designed to improve the reading achievement of Kentucky’s primary students through research-based intervention for struggling readers within the state primary program. Currently (school year 2006-2007), 312 schools receive RTA funds. Approximately 80 additional schools will be funded in 2007-2008.

If the legislature continues to increase funding for RTA so that an additional 80-100 schools are added to this program each year, the KBE may want to consider at a future meeting if this program should continue as a competitive program or if the program should become part of an allocation to all schools to implement early reading intervention programs. KBE may want in the future to consider making this a part of their legislative agenda discussion.

NCLB-Reading First

Reading First was enacted to improve reading skills for primary age (K-3) students; this grant is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Kentucky receives \$13.7 million annually for six years (2003-2009) with reauthorization in 2007.

The Kentucky Department of Education awarded Reading First funding to 73 elementary schools in 42 districts, ranging from \$130,000-\$170,000, depending on school size. Funds will continue to be made available to these schools over the course of the grant, dependent upon successful implementation of their Reading First Plans. In the fall of 2006, seven schools did not meet the state benchmark and were notified of their status as a “red flag” school. These schools will receive additional technical assistance from the State Reading First Coaches and KDE staff. The schools have submitted the following evidence for review:

- District/School Annual Performance Report
- Quarterly Budget Reports
- KDE Reading First Program Indicators Document
- District and School Implementation Plans

As a part of the grant, 10 state reading coaches are employed to work with grant schools and to provide continuous job embedded professional development to school coaches and administrators. Two Principal Institutes are offered annually for school and district administrators involved in the Reading First grant, including principals, superintendents and district coaches. In addition, the Special Education Cooperatives each have a literacy consultant who works collaboratively with KDE staff and the 10 state reading coaches on Reading First and other literacy initiatives to build a more coherent and systemic approach to improving teacher practice and student performance in literacy.

Reading First also funded the development of online professional development modules for teachers on the five components of effective literacy instruction. Any teacher or administrator in Kentucky can access these modules at no cost through Kentucky Virtual High School.

Reading First Professional Development Grants have been awarded to twelve elementary schools from across the state who were Reading First eligible but non-funded. If the school has fewer than 300 students, it received \$12,500.00. If it has more than 300 enrolled, the school received \$25,000.00.

KDE provides funding for expanding access to professional development across the Commonwealth. The literacy coaches and their cadres provide professional development for general education and special education teachers at regional sites for primary teachers (K-3). Teachers in grades 4-8 are also offered professional development with follow-up days. In addition, teams of general education and special teachers in grades 9-12 are offered professional development on *Effective Instructional Principles Embedded Across All Content Areas*. This professional development includes follow-up days as well as classroom observations, coaching and feedback.

Teacher’s Professional Growth Fund (TPGF)

KRS 156.553 and 704 KAR 3:490, the Teacher’s Professional Growth Fund, was amended to give priority for funds to provide professional development and support to reading and mathematics coaches and mentors in grades 4-12 through the 2009-2010 school year.

With the TPGF allocations, the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development (CCLD) in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Education initiated the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project (ALCP), a professional development initiative for teachers in grades 4-12 to serve as school literacy coaches. The professional development focuses on content-area literacy, literacy coaching and mentoring, strategic planning, and effective literacy instruction.

Over the course of two years, participating literacy coaches will be able to earn 12 hours of graduate credit. Throughout the school year, literacy coaches participate in monthly professional development, coaching network sessions, and an on-line learning community. Currently, there are 14 districts, 30 schools and four universities participating in this initiative. A new cohort of teachers will begin in the summer of 2007.

Writing Portfolio Procedures and Professional Development Initiatives

New portfolio administration guidelines were developed, approved by KBE, and distributed to schools through the Writing Cluster Leader Network professional development and administrator networks and professional development sessions. The guidelines are also available on KDE's website. All schools have received the new guidelines.

Additionally, the Writing Development Handbook and Portfolio Scoring Handbook have been revised to reflect KBE recommendations. They were distributed to schools and districts through the networks and trainings previously mentioned and are available on the KDE website. Writing Cluster Leaders will receive further training prior to portfolio scoring. Professional development sessions have also focused on the analytical and reflective forms of writing. The handbooks and professional development sessions have placed emphasis on writing as an overall part of literacy, as a means to support student learning.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Academies

KDE offers three regional LEP academies offering best practices and research-based methods for teaching English Language Learners (ELLs). There were 16 districts represented with 31 teams and a total of 170 participants. The academies engage instructional teams in learning experiences throughout the school year that advance their understanding and application of recommended instructional practices. These best practices are designed to reduce barriers for ELL students and address instruction in reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. The five-day academies consist of two two-day sessions (October and December) and a final day in January.

Emergent LEP Training

Kentucky schools are experiencing a substantial growth in the number of students with limited English proficiency in districts all across Kentucky. Recent data indicates that 123 of the 176 districts reported serving LEP students. Many of these districts have what is considered a low incidence of LEP students (fewer than 20 per district) and have a great need for professional development and support to accommodate these students in developing literacy skills. Districts

are offered an opportunity called Emergent LEP Training to gain information on a variety of relevant topics. Specific training that has a focus on literacy includes:

- LEP Standards
- W-APT and ACCESS—new statewide LEP assessments that assess speaking, writing, listening and speaking
- Program Service Plans (PSP)
- Use of instructional supports such as picture dictionary, bilingual dictionaries, Help Toolkit

Special Education Literacy Specialists

KDE has funded through the Special Education Regional Cooperatives, 12 Special Education Literacy Specialists to serve their respective regions and assist the state Reading First Coaches in planning and providing professional development required by the Reading First State Grant. They provide consultation, technical assistance and job-embedded professional development in the area of literacy for regular and special education teachers, paraeducators and administrators. The specialists also work collaboratively with KDE to implement KDE's comprehensive literacy plan and help schools with the development and implementation of literacy plans.

Reading Strategies CDs

Reading Strategies in Action and *More Reading Strategies* are CDs developed as a joint project of KET and KDE, designed to build teacher knowledge about the most effective reading strategies to use with middle and high school students in the context of everyday classroom instruction. The demonstration CDs include teachers modeling the use of strategies. Districts, schools and universities received copies.

In addition, CDs are being developed on effective literacy practices to disseminate to every Kentucky elementary school and university. The first CDs, released in the summer of 2006, are *K-3 Strategies in Action*. The second, to be released in the summer of 2007, focuses on students with disabilities, and the third, to be released in the summer of 2008, focuses on administrators and leadership in literacy.

Kentucky Occupational Skill Standards Assessment Scenario Writing

The Division of Career and Technical Education has been working with the Office of Teaching and Learning in an effort to identify ways in which to better address writing in Career and Technical Education. A scenario component of the Kentucky Occupational Skill Standards Assessment, which tests students' technical skills as applied to a work related situation, is being revised. The goal is to take all existing scenarios and make them consistent in difficulty and format across all assessment areas. At the end of the testing and scoring process, scenarios will be released from the 2007 assessment with examples of student writing to use for instruction. This process will not only provide the teachers with a sample of the assessment and the standard to which the work was scored, but it will mirror the process used with CATS writing items.

Technical Writing in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Classroom

Nearly 70% of high school students participate in career and technical education at some point in their high school career. By developing and implementing a systematic approach to writing in the career and technical education classroom, CTE can impact the assessment results in writing as well as provide students with a better understanding of what it means to develop quality technical writing skills as they prepare for postsecondary education and/or the workforce.

The Division of Career and Technical Education is working with the Office of Teaching and Learning on ways to train the CTE teachers to incorporate more technical writing assignments in their classrooms. Specific program area ideas and examples were developed, and resource materials developed by the Office of Teaching and Learning were distributed to all CTE teachers.

The Division of Career and Technical Education is in the process of collecting samples of model writing assignments for each CTE career cluster. A technical writing web cast is scheduled for all CTE teachers, coordinators and administrators in an effort to continue communicating the need for improved writing in the CTE classroom.

In future KBE meetings, specific literacy initiatives will be highlighted.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Because the Kentucky Department of Education's literacy initiatives support students from early childhood through high school graduation, they have a strong impact on enabling students to reach proficiency in literacy.

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